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# Claude Vivier and Karlheinz Stockhausen : moments from a double portrait

Bob Gilmore

## 1. Introduction : “le plus grand musicien actuel...”

“Dans ses œuvres Stockhausen veut élargir le champ de la conscience humaine, il veut nous montrer des planètes nouvelles,” wrote Claude Vivier in December 1978 of the music of his former teacher. “Mais l’homme Stockhausen qui est-il? Dans *Momente*, au moment “KK” (K: Klang/son et K: Karlheinz) il nous offre son autoportrait: un grand appel solitaire et triste; son urgence de dire est issue d’une grande solitude, d’un besoin de communiquer avec le reste du cosmos”.<sup>1</sup> It is striking that these last words seem to apply equally well to teacher and student: for what better characterisation could there be of Vivier’s own music than “un grand appel solitaire et triste,” its particular blend of expressive intensity and disciplined calculation issuing from “un besoin de communiquer avec le reste du cosmos”? Reading Vivier’s text, a brief programme note written for a performance of Stockhausen’s *Mantra* by the SMCQ in Montreal, it is clear that the reverence he feels towards his former teacher’s work is tinged with empathy for its expressive aims – even with some degree of identification with the person of its creator.

That Stockhausen played a crucial role in Vivier’s musical development is beyond question. In the autobiographical note Vivier supplied for a performance of his *Lettura di Dante* in Toronto in 1975, he noted: “Born in Montreal in 1948. Born to music with Gilles Tremblay in 1968. Born to composition with Stockhausen in 1972.” It was in that latter year, during rehearsals for Stockhausen’s *Momente*, that Vivier claimed to have had a revelation of “l’essence même de la composition musicale,” a defining moment that marked the true beginnings of his life as a composer. Indeed, the widespread view is that, during the years he studied formally with Stockhausen at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne (1972-1974), Vivier hero-worshipped the German composer. His former teacher Gilles Tremblay remarks that

1. Vivier, 1991, p. 94.

2. Gilles Tremblay interviewed by the author, Montréal, 5 November 2002.

3. Kevin Volans interviewed by the author, Knockmaroon, Ireland, 27 August 2006.

4. Richard Toop, email to the author, 15 August 2002.

5. Clarence Barlow interviewed by the author, Amsterdam, 11 August 2002.

6. Cf. Iddon, 2004.

Vivier was “dazzled” [*ébloui*] by Stockhausen;<sup>2</sup> while Vivier’s fellow student Kevin Volans recalls that, at that time, “the general perception of Claude was that he was *the* Stockhausen student. He idolised him, and idolised his way of working. It was intriguing how Claude managed to reconcile that with his own sort of mystic Catholicism”<sup>3</sup> – almost as though, Volans seems to imply, Vivier viewed his teacher as a sort of surrogate god. Richard Toop, Stockhausen’s teaching assistant for the academic year 1973-1974, recalls that “Claude was by far Stockhausen’s most loyal adherent in the class (in fact, I think of loyalty as one of Claude’s key characteristics), and the only one to share Stockhausen’s spiritual outlook to any significant degree.”<sup>4</sup> Vivier’s friend Clarence Barlow, another student in the Stockhausen class, had at that time begun to react against much of his teacher’s music and its overall aesthetic, and found Vivier’s reverence toward Stockhausen regrettable, even problematic: “I remember hearing a performance of Claude’s *Chants*,” recalls Barlow, “and remember hating it. I thought it had all these pathetic Stockhausen gestures, and Stockhausen himself was beginning to annoy me tremendously.”<sup>5</sup>

Since the mid-1950s Karlheinz Stockhausen had been widely regarded as one of the leading figures of the international musical avant-garde, at the forefront of new developments musical, theoretical and ideological. Amongst the composers of his generation the authority and influence he wielded was perhaps equalled only by Pierre Boulez. Even brilliant contemporaries like Ligeti, Xenakis, Nono, Berio or Kagel had taken longer to become firmly established; Stockhausen’s well-developed sense of his own importance was backed up by early masterpieces such as *Gruppen*, *Gesang der Jünglinge*, *Kontakte* and *Carré*. However, by the time Vivier began formal studies with him in the autumn of 1972, the position Stockhausen had held so forcibly for the best part of two decades was under assault: his authority was in decline, and the whole system of values for which he stood – musical and otherwise – was being questioned to its foundations, even, in some quarters, reviled and demonised. While this shift of attitude toward Stockhausen and his work has become clearer with hindsight, Vivier can hardly have been unaware of it during the years of their closest contact.<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between the young Vivier and his distinguished teacher is therefore a complex one. While Vivier evidently fell powerfully under the sway of Stockhausen’s music and ideas and his charismatic and domineering personality, we may wonder about the effect on him of the changing attitudes toward Stockhausen as the 1970s wore on. Vivier’s early scores have aspects that are clearly, and sometimes audibly, derivative of his teacher’s

work, whereas it is hard to detect any obvious Stockhausen influence on the masterpieces of his last years, works like *Lonely Child*, *Prologue pour un Marco Polo*, *Bouchara*, or the *Trois Airs pour un opéra imaginaire*. (Today, of course, it is a commonplace that artistic influence operates in a myriad of ways, conscious and unconscious, through rejection as well as affirmation, through wilful misreading or misinterpretation as much as dutiful acceptance and continuation; that Vivier's later works bear little or no obvious Stockhausen imprint does not mean that he had renounced all involvement with Stockhausen and his world.) This article, then, attempts to paint the complex relationship between the two men, focusing on the years of their closest contact – 1971-1974 – a time when both they and the world around them were undergoing profound transformation.

## **2. “...un peu distant et comprenant guère mes manières très chaudes...”**

For a young Canadian composer at the beginning of the 1970s the decision to study in Europe was a common one. In Vivier's case, had encouragement to travel been needed, it would have come amply from his teacher at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montreal, Gilles Tremblay, who had himself as a younger man studied in Europe for a period of seven years. Study in Europe was more than simply a ‘finishing school’: in the eyes of an important minority in Quebec it was a passport towards an international career and a crucial step away from parochialism.

For Quebec composers, however, the destination of choice had overwhelmingly been France. The two leading figures of the Montreal-based musical avant-garde, Gilles Tremblay and Serge Garant, had both spent important years in Paris, and it is natural to wonder why Vivier did not follow suit. His first visit to Europe was in the summer of 1970, when he attended the Darmstadt summer courses at which Stockhausen had for many years been a permanent fixture.<sup>7</sup> This was almost certainly his first encounter with Stockhausen in person: Stockhausen had visited Montreal in 1964, but the young Vivier, then still a pupil in a Catholic boarding school, would probably have been oblivious to this. Stockhausen was in many ways the dominant voice at the 1970 summer courses, giving seminars on “Micro- and Macro-continuum”, “Meta-collage and Integration”, “Expansion of the Tempo Scale”, “Feedback”, “Spectral Harmonics and Expansion of Dynamics” and “Spatial Music”.

The following summer, 1971, Vivier was back in Europe, this time with the intention of studying formally with Stockhausen. Thanks to a brief notice in the Canadian magazine *La Scène Musicale* (June 5 1971) we know he

7. We know very little about Vivier's experiences that summer, except that it seems to have been a productive time for him: the manuscript of the first version of *Hiérophanie*, for soprano and ensemble, is signed “Heidelberg, août 1970”.

departed in May “for Germany” – the score of his *Musik für das Ende* for voices and percussion is signed “Cologne juli 71 Amen!”. It was presumably in Cologne in the early summer of 1971 that he applied to study with Stockhausen, then newly appointed as a Professor at the Hochschule, but was, at first, refused. Clarence Barlow, who also applied that summer, tells the story:

Stockhausen I know took offence at his looks and his smell – Claude had this sheepskin coat which exuded a certain sheep odour – and maybe at his way of talking, which had a certain namby-pamby quality. Stockhausen gave us a job to do: we were supposed to write something based on the formula from his *Mantra*. Each one of us got a photocopy of the formula. So we all sat around this table – we had two or maybe three hours to write a piece. Anyway, Stockhausen loved my handwriting and said, “Oh, you English are so excellent in writing” – I think he thought I was going to be one of his copyists. At the end of the exam he showed me Claude’s score, and said, “Just look at this! Look at this writing! Would you accept somebody like this as a student? This man will never be a good composer, with writing like that!” And Claude was refused. His piece was called *Übung sur “Mantra”*.<sup>8</sup>

8. Clarence Barlow interviewed by the author, Amsterdam, August 11, 2002.

A change of plan was therefore called for, and in late June Vivier applied to the Institute of Sonology, then located in Utrecht, to study with Stockhausen’s former colleague Gottfried Michael Koenig. (Although possibly dictated largely by circumstance, it is interesting nonetheless that Vivier’s “second choice” of place of study still places emphasis on work in electronic music.) He was accepted for the beginning of the academic year in October, and meanwhile spent the summer in France, studying privately with another important mentor, one who has received too little attention in the existing literature on Vivier: the Iraq-born French composer and conductor Paul Méfano.

The earliest reference to Stockhausen we have from Vivier’s own hand is in a letter written from Paris in the summer of 1971 to his Montreal friend Pierre Rochon. Ensclosed in a cheap hotel in Paris’s sixth *arrondissement*, Vivier describes France as “*un pays affreux*,” adding that “*autant j’aime l’Allemagne autant je hais la France*.” And yet the letter shows us that, whatever the truth of Vivier’s later reverence for his teacher-to-be, the supposed idolatry was not there from the start: perhaps he was still hurt by Stockhausen’s rejection. He begins by describing the work he has been doing, analysing, with Méfano, Boulez’s *Le Soleil des eaux* (“*extraordinaire mais tout de même à l’opposé le plus complet de ma musique*”), then goes on to say:

*Les musiciens de Stockhausen sont très bien je les aime beaucoup, ils m'ont énormément apporté peut-être plus que Stock., toujours un peu distant et comprenant guère mes manières très chaudes qui me font continuellement serrer la main des gens! J'ai entendu Sternklang une nouvelle œuvre; c'est 5 fois Stimmung mais beaucoup moins bien. Il prépare Trans pour Donaueschingen j'espère que ce sera mieux. Je dois dire que la vision qu'il donne du groupe dans Aus den Sieben Tagen et ce qui est vraiment le groupe me déconcerte beaucoup. Ils sont toujours des "musiciens pro".*<sup>9</sup>

Despite these reservations, it is clear that his wish to study with Stockhausen had not simply vanished. In the summer of 1972 he again made the journey to Darmstadt for the summer courses, which that year ran over eighteen days, from July 20th to August 6th. The resident composers who taught that summer, besides Stockhausen himself, were Kagel, Ligeti, Xenakis and Wolff, and Vivier attended lectures by all of them. The major works of Stockhausen performed were *Stimmung* (on August 3rd), *Kontakte* (on August 5th) and *Mantra* (on August 6th). Among younger composers, Clarence Barlow caused a minor scandal with his minimalist *Textmusik* for piano, played by Herbert Henck (the performance was booed, but Vivier was among the enthusiastic, and Stockhausen himself not antagonistic); and Vivier played tam-tam in the performance of Horatiu Radulescu's *Flood for the Eternal's Origins* (on August 5th). Another student at Darmstadt that summer was Gérard Grisey, then twenty-six; he, Vivier, and Vivier's Montreal friend Walter Boudreau became "beer buddies" and would hang out together. Boudreau recalls that "a lot of the stuff that was being forwarded to us in Darmstadt, both the food and the music, made us puke," but remembers himself, Vivier and Grisey amusing themselves by incessantly imitating the vocal overtone sonorities of *Stimmung* as they walked around the town or on trams, much to the annoyance of one particular driver who threatened to throw them off if they didn't stop.<sup>10</sup>

Also at Darmstadt in 1972, following lectures by musicologists Carl Dahlhaus and Reinhold Brinkmann, was an animated discussion in which the middle-aged avant-garde was accused of conspiring to exclude the young.<sup>11</sup> This sentiment, expressed in various ways, had been in the air for a few years. Ligeti protested that he would be delighted to hear stimulating new work by the younger generation but little was forthcoming. Stockhausen was the main focus of many of the attacks, with the accusation that both by the number of his pieces performed at the summer courses, and by his guru-like presence as teacher, he and his ideology were overly domineering; and, from another perspective, the quasi-religious aspects of his work were found bothersome by many of the participants. These attacks were to become worse

9. Claude Vivier to Pierre Rochon, undated [between June and September 1971], Archives Claude Vivier, Special Collections Department, University of Montreal.

10. Walter Boudreau interviewed by the author, Montreal, 14 November 2002. Vivier had heard *Stimmung* previously (at the latest by September 1971), as he compares Stockhausen's *Sternklang* unfavourably to *Stimmung* in the undated letter to his friend Pierre Rochon cited above.

11. See Iddon, 2004, especially Chapter 4. Criticisms of the aesthetic rigidity of Darmstadt were nothing new, and similar sentiments had been expressed at least a decade or so earlier. See Attinello, Fox, and Iddon, 2007.

in the 1974 courses. We do not know Vivier's attitude to these sentiments; in any case the months that followed would see the period of his deepest immersion in Stockhausen's thought.

### 3. "...l'essence même de la composition musicale"

In all probability Vivier had finally been accepted formally as Stockhausen's student by the time of the 1972 Darmstadt courses. His handwriting having not notably improved in the intervening year, the received version of the story – whether apocryphal or not – is that he secured his place at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne through flattery. As Gilles Tremblay tells it, Stockhausen asked him why he wanted to study with him. "Vivier said: Because you are the greatest composer in the world. That was enough: the only entrance test!"<sup>12</sup> Besides his composition studies with Stockhausen at the Hochschule from 1972 to 1974 he studied electronic music with Hans Ulrich Humpert and, in his second year, analysis with Stockhausen's teaching assistant, the young English musicologist Richard Toop.

Stockhausen gained his professorship in Cologne in the autumn of 1971 when the suicide of Bernd Alois Zimmermann (the previous year) had left a vacant position.<sup>13</sup> During the two years Vivier studied with him, Stockhausen's class contained a wealth of extraordinary creative talent, including Clarence Barlow, Laszlo Dubrovay, John McGuire, Robert HP Platz, Wolfgang Rihm, Kevin Volans, and Walter Zimmermann. Stockhausen's then most recent major works were *Stimmung* (1968), *Mantra* (1970), *Sternklang* (1971) and *Trans* (1971); but this is also the period of the "intuitive music" of *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (May 1968) and *Für kommende Zeiten* (1968-1970).

A detailed picture of Stockhausen's thought at the time Vivier first got to know him emerges from two books, *Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer* by the American journalist Jonathan Cott, based on conversations recorded in February and September 1971, and *Stockhausen on Music*, a collection of lectures and interviews compiled by Robin Maconie, Part 1 of which collects lecture transcripts from 1971.<sup>14</sup> They show clearly the breadth of Stockhausen's interests both in music and outside it. He speaks extensively of the consciousness-widening impact of his travels, of his belief in intuitive music, of his love of electronic technology, of his interest in the tastes and behaviour of the younger generation and, at length, of his own musical ideas. The mesmerising nature of Stockhausen's conversation is readily apparent from viewing the extant film recordings from these years, some of which, of lectures he gave in England, form the basis of *Stockhausen on Music*.<sup>15</sup> They make it clear that he was no ordinary teacher: his ideas roll forth in slow

12. Tremblay cited in Paul Griffiths, "Vivier", in Griffiths, 2005, p. 186. In October 1971 Vivier applied for a second time for a "Bourse de Perfectionnement pour Artiste" from the Conseil des Arts du Canada for the year beginning June 1st 1972. He wrote: "Mon projet d'ailleurs commencé cette année se présente comme suit: Études centrales à Utrecht à l'institut de sonologie. Études à Cologne avec Stockhausen à la Musik Hochschule. Études à Paris avec Paul Méfano qui lui m'aide à faire le point entre Cologne et Utrecht et qui m'apporte le point de vue français... Donc lieu d'habitation Utrecht, travail en plus à Paris et Cologne." Copy in the Archives of the Fondation Vivier, Montreal.

13. Kurtz, 1992, p. 194.

14. Vivier's copy of Cott's book (presently in the Archives of the Fondation Vivier, Montreal) is inscribed: "einen wunderschönen Monat Mai 1974/ lieber Vivier/wünscht Ihnen herzlich/Ihr Stockhausen". Stockhausen had a few months earlier given him a copy of his booklet *Vier Kriterien der Elektronischen Musik* published by Droste Verlag Düsseldorf, inscribing his wishes for a Happy New Year 1974.

15. Several such film extracts are currently available on YouTube: see for example <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=piPvc2jvdow&feature=related> [accessed December 11, 2008].

but practically perfect English, his eyes seeking contact with every person in the room as he speaks. They are mesmerising performances, especially to one as thirsty for knowledge and guidance as the twenty-four-year-old Vivier. Beyond his immediate charisma, however, there were more complex sides to Stockhausen the man. Clarence Barlow comments that, overall, Stockhausen was “a mixture of charm and arrogance. I can very easily put it down to self-defence in terms of his arrogance; his charm was provoked by a compliment. So if I asked him a question about one of his pieces he’d be all charm and say, ‘Oh, you must come and visit me.’ But if you had one slight word of criticism all his shackles would go up and he’d become totally arrogant.”<sup>16</sup>

The affinity the young Vivier felt for his teacher was surely compounded by the similarities between them, peculiarities shared by few others in their immediate surroundings. Both Stockhausen and Vivier were Catholics, or rather ex-Catholics who had evolved a free-thinking attitude within a basic paradigm of belief. Vivier had been educated in religious schools in Quebec and was headed for the vocation of a Catholic brother until he was asked to leave the Noviciat des Frères Maristes in St-Hyacinthe midway through the school year 1966-1967, at the age of eighteen.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter he retained an essentially spiritual outlook, still believing in God while having no specific doctrinal allegiance. Stockhausen, for his part, remarked: “Until 1960 I was a man who related to the cosmos and God through Catholicism, a very particular religion that I chose for myself almost as a way of opposing the post-war Sartrean nihilistic attitudes of the established intellectuals... And then I began to float because I got in touch with many other religions.”<sup>18</sup> If the basis of Vivier’s belief was less intellectual, less studied than Stockhausen’s, the two men’s views nonetheless intersect at a certain point. Vivier remarked in an interview that “I got to know music when I was at the *juvénat*... I recognised music in a Midnight Mass we sang. I was extremely pious, I had faith, I wanted to be a pure human being, to give myself totally, and for me music... is a way of achieving my own redemption. In that sense I am very Catholic.”<sup>19</sup> Music as a means of achieving personal redemption: Stockhausen would surely have concurred.

Beyond their respective backgrounds in Catholicism, Vivier shared – and perhaps was consciously steered by his teacher towards – Stockhausen’s more idiosyncratic interests in mysticism and the occult. Thus Gilles Tremblay and others believe that it was Stockhausen who introduced Vivier to – or at least encouraged his interests in – occult texts such as *Les Clavicules de Salomon*, a text on magic first published in Paris in 1825 from which Vivier drew in compiling the text for *Chants* in 1972-1973, and *The Urantia Book*,

16. Clarence Barlow interviewed by the author, Amsterdam, August 11, 2002.

17. The much-mythologised reasons for this expulsion are explored in depth in the first chapter of my book *Claude Vivier: A Biography* (forthcoming).

18. Stockhausen in Cott, 1974, p. 26.

19. Vivier interviewed by Claude Cubaynes, Radio-Canada, November 1981: cassette copy in the Archives of the Fondation Vivier, Montreal.

20. Gilles Tremblay interviewed by the author, Montreal, November 5, 2002.

21. Thérèse Desjardins interviewed by the author, Montreal, November 3, 2002.

22. Parts of this sketchbook were published in the folder “Kompositions-Kurs über SIRIUS” distributed at the Stockhausen Courses in Kürten in 2000. Stockhausen adds that “I came upon the information about Sirius, the central sun, in Lorber’s *Kosmos in geistiger Schau*”. Jakob Lorber (1800-1864) was a Christian mystic and visionary (and a one-time violin pupil of Paganini) who, around the age of forty, claimed to hear an inner voice that he believed to be the voice of Jesus Christ. He produced an enormous body of writing, much of which was supposedly dictated to him by his inner voice.

23. Richard Toop, email to the author, August 17, 2002.

24. Walter Zimmermann, personal communication, October 2008.

a collection of unorthodox texts on spirituality first published in Chicago in 1955 that would later become important to the conception of aspects of Stockhausen’s own *Licht* cycle, and to which parts of *Donnerstag* (1978-1980) make explicit reference.<sup>20</sup> (Overall, though, Vivier’s later work could be said to move away from the mystical content that infuses early pieces like *O Kosmos!* and parts of *Chants*, as well as “middle-period” works like *Journal* and *Kopernikus*, toward the broadly humanist content of the works of the *Marco Polo* opera.)

On a more personal level, both Stockhausen and Vivier shared a sense of uncertainty about their origins – genuine uncertainty in Vivier’s case, and wilful uncertainty in Stockhausen’s. Vivier was born to unknown parents in Montreal and was placed in an orphanage – his surname is that of his adoptive family, not of his birth parents. He was obsessed by the identity of his mother in particular and, towards the end of his life, expressed a wish to trace her, a wish denied him by his murder a few years later.<sup>21</sup> Around the time he began to teach Vivier, Stockhausen began to indulge a curious fantasy about his own origins. While in his case we have the certainty that he was born in the village of Mödrath, not far from Cologne, on August 22 1928 to Simon Stockhausen and his wife Gertrud, in a sketchbook from 1975 he wrote: “In connection with the composition *Sternklang* [1971] I closely watched the star constellations in Kürten. From my study as well as from the kitchen my attention focused time and again on the constellation Canis Major and the star Sirius. Without knowing the reason why, I had fantastic visions of being a descendant of Sirius... Since then my curiosity about Sirius has slowly and steadily grown.”<sup>22</sup> It is not known how much of this revisionist personal mythology, if any, he shared with Vivier, who may at this time have been wholly unaware of this curious parallel between them; but nonetheless for both men the question of their origins became a fantasy world, a place for sometimes irrational flights of the creative imagination.

Also on a personal level, despite the evident loyalty shown by Vivier to his teacher, Richard Toop has observed that “paradoxically, Stockhausen never seemed to take Claude as seriously as he took most of the other students.”<sup>23</sup> The reason for this is not totally clear, but the attitude was not exclusive to Stockhausen. Walter Zimmermann recalls (“with regret”) that he and several of the other students used to tease Vivier a good deal, however good-naturedly, and often to make fun of him.<sup>24</sup> We may perhaps put this down to some sort of personal incompatibility between Vivier’s “*manières très chaudes*” and the more reserved, polite exterior of Stockhausen; whether or not Vivier himself perceived Stockhausen’s attitude in this way we do not know.

The year's studies at the Hochschule got off to what for some students was an inauspicious start. Stockhausen was busy supervising the rehearsals of *Momente* for forthcoming performances in December 1972 and January 1973, so he would insist his students attend the rehearsals, during which they could potentially learn much, rather than offering them formal lectures. For some this was incredibly boring and frustrating, but not for Vivier: it was during these weeks of rehearsals that, as mentioned above, he experienced his vision of "*l'essence même de la composition musicale*", as a consequence of which, in December, he began the composition of *Chants*, which represented for him "*le moment premier de mon existence de compositeur.*" Vivier would continue to follow various of Stockhausen's rehearsals during the remainder of his studies in Europe: in an undated letter to Serge Garant, probably from February 1973, he writes: "*Je me prépare bientôt à aller à Londres en mars, pour suivre des répétitions d'œuvres de Stockhausen.*" That same year he attended the performance of the third region of Stockhausen's *Hymnen* at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris.<sup>25</sup> (This devotion may not have been entirely devoid of self-interest: in the same letter to Garant, Vivier adds that in Paris "[*m*]a pièce pour 3 voix de femmes a toutes les chances d'être jouée, de même que le Groupe de Stockhausen qui accepterait de jouer une pièce 'Live electronic'." The latter piece never materialised.)

What Stockhausen did teach, however, usually in the form of extended sessions at his home in Kürten, was of enormous interest to Vivier, even if the direct impact on his work is not always self-evident. Richard Toop recalls: "Stockhausen analysed *Mantra* in detail during the 1972-1973 classes. I don't remember Claude saying anything about this, and I don't find any trace of it in, say, *Lettura di Dante*, much of which was composed at the piano anyway. Stockhausen also analysed the Europa version of *Momente*, which undoubtedly impressed Claude."<sup>26</sup> In his second year in Cologne, Vivier took analysis classes from Toop himself. "The deal was that I would give two 2-hour analyses classes a week," Toop recalls. "One on Stockhausen's work, and the other on whatever I liked, but with the understanding that it would usually be twentieth century, and probably post-war. In addition, I and the students would go to Stockhausen's house in Kürten about once a month for a long (four hour+) session". As to what specifically Toop taught that year: "Of Stockhausen I remember spending quite a lot of time on the *Klavierstück* Nr. 4, and *Trans*. Of other composers, I know I looked at various pieces of Webern, Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes*, the Barraqué Sonata, and Boulez's Third Sonata (I remember we spent an afternoon coming to the conclusion that despite all the hieroglyphics, there were basically only two (or was

25. Vivier's friend Walter Boudreau, then too hard up to afford a ticket, had sneaked into the same performance via the artists' entrance, demonstratively carrying his saxophone, and had quietly taken a seat in the auditorium hoping not to be discovered. Vivier, sitting several rows behind, suddenly saw him, bellowed out his name and clambered over the rows of seats to greet his old pal. "I nearly died", recalls Boudreau. Walter Boudreau interviewed by the author, Montreal, November 14, 2002.

26. Richard Toop, email to the author, 17 August 2002. The possible relationship of Stockhausen's use of ring modulation in *Mantra* to the development of spectral techniques in Vivier's music around 1980 is discussed in Gilmore, 2007, pp. 2-17.

it three?) routes through *Constellation-Miroir*, plus some minor variants.) In addition, I think I looked at some of the pieces arising from Gottfried Michael Koenig's Project 2 programmes. We made a collective realisation of Dieter Schnebel's *Glossolalie*. But we also spent a lot of time discussing general issues." There were further practical outcomes: "When Stockhausen urged all the students to write choral pieces on (preferably non-Christian) sacred texts in response to a request from a German choral director – his own contribution being the opening section of what became *Atmen gibt das Leben* – only Claude responded with any enthusiasm, though I think Robert [Platz] also came up with something eventually."<sup>27</sup>

27. Richard Toop, email to the author, August 17, 2002.

#### **4. "Il m'était très important de prendre quelque temps avec Stockhausen pour revoir le tout..."**

For all the benefits of Stockhausen's teaching, which the majority of his students are quick to point out, there were aspects that were more controversial, even disturbing. Clarence Barlow was, by that time – in his third semester with Stockhausen – becoming "sceptical"; he admired Stockhausen's technical command and concern for precision, and learned much from it, but was increasingly finding Stockhausen's music "old-fashioned" and his teaching "a monologue" that did not invite much participation, and certainly not much disagreement.<sup>28</sup> Barlow was "out of the whole serial thing" already by 1972, as can be heard in early works like *Textmusik* (1971) or... *until...* (1972), which respond to minimalism (which Stockhausen, by and large, abhorred) as well as offering the beginnings of a quite individual approach to algorithmic composition. Above all, Barlow was keen to deflate what he felt to be the pretentiousness of the Stockhausen "aura", even poking fun at the entrance test Stockhausen had given his students in his piano work *Fantasia quasi una Sonata con «Mantra» di Stockhausen* (1973). Walter Zimmermann, who was studying both with Stockhausen and Kagel, shared certain of these reservations. His personal aesthetic position had the counterbalance of a strong affinity with American contemporary arts, including the work of Gertrude Stein and John Cage; Richard Toop has argued that the "extreme reduction of means, and cool, unemotional objectivity" in Zimmermann's music "is, at one level, a symbolic purging of European thinking and tradition" – not least, one might add, of the whole German avant-garde as personified by Stockhausen.<sup>29</sup> In 1975, a year after Vivier's return to Montreal, Zimmermann produced a substantial piano work, *Beginner's Mind*, which scandalised certain areas of the German new music establishment (which, in Kevin Volans's words, accused it of "musical devolution" with hints of

28. Clarence Barlow interviewed by the author, Amsterdam, August 11, 2002.

29. Toop, 1998.

Third Reich-style anti-intellectualism”<sup>30</sup>) and, in its quiet way, announced the beginning of a whole new direction in German composition soon to become known as The New Simplicity. Volans himself arrived in Cologne in the summer of 1973 with his mind already full of heterodox ideas; he sympathised strongly with tendencies already present in Zimmermann’s music and came to feel oppressed by Stockhausen who, he has said, “gave us all this feeling of serial guilt”.<sup>31</sup> At the time, of course, these composers had not quite the clarity of perspective available to us now: Barlow, returning to Cologne in the spring of 1975 after eighteen months away, recalls that “when I first saw Walter’s music at that time I didn’t quite grasp what he was onto,” although in time he came to understand it well; whereas, in comparison, “Claude’s was probably music which frightened me off because of all the vibrato-ing sopranos.”<sup>32</sup>

Amidst a growing climate of student agnosticism, a turning point in Stockhausen’s career came following the 1974 summer courses at Darmstadt, which that year ran from 22 July to 8 August.<sup>33</sup> Kagel, Stockhausen, Xenakis and Wolff were all there as they had been in 1972, but not Ligeti; also much in evidence were two young composers from Stockhausen’s circle, Péter Eötvös and Johannes Fritsch. Stockhausen’s music was represented by a revival of *Mikrofonie I* (1964), by one of the “intuitive pieces” from the set *Für kommende Zeiten* (1968-70) and, of new works, by the *Indianerlieder* and *Herbstmusik*, neither of which met with particularly favourable responses. A mood of unease was sometimes evident amongst the students in his lectures as well. Wilhelm Schlüter, the person responsible for the administrative aspects of the summer courses, reported that on 9 August 1974, the day after the close of the courses, the Panel in charge had already stated that for 1976 they required a “total change”.<sup>34</sup> The principal reason for this appears to have been a walk-out from one of Stockhausen’s seminars, which Schlüter states was orchestrated by three participants with Marxist leanings.

1974 marked Stockhausen’s last teaching at Darmstadt until 1996. In his exhaustive study of the Darmstadt of 1968-1984, the English composer and scholar Martin Iddon notes: “The minutes of the meeting of 27 December 1974 state that Stockhausen *could* be reinvited, but only in the case that a new composition of sufficient quality was available. Even in this case, Stockhausen was to be restricted to a single seminar and a single concert. Aloys Kontarsky acerbically stated: ‘For all that, if Karlheinz writes his *Wohltemperiertes Klavier* tomorrow, he obviously comes back.’<sup>35</sup> This criticism of the decreasing standard of Stockhausen’s work is particularly damning, given that Kontarsky had been for many years one of Stockhausen’s staunchest collaborators.”<sup>36</sup>

30. Volans, programme note for his *Nine Beginnings* for two pianos (1976-1979): Chester Music.

31. Volans quoted in Gilmore, 2006, p. 24.

32. Barlow interviewed by the author, Amsterdam, August 11 2002. An interesting perspective on the aesthetic coherence in the work of the young Cologne-based composers at this time is given in Fox, 2007.

33. Friday August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1974 saw the premiere of Vivier’s *Désintégration*, given in the Georg-Büchner-Schule by Herbert Henck and Christoph Delz, pianos, with the string compliment formed of Saschko Gawriloff and pupils (Kalevi Aho, Vjera Katalinic, Andreas Pflüger, Jacqueline Ross and Claes Pearce).

34. Misch and Bandur, 2001, p. 518.

35. *Idem*.

36. Iddon, 2004, p. 60.

37. Misch and Bandur, 2001, p. 557.

38. Griffiths, 1986, p. 58.

39. Iddon, 2004, p. 42.

40. Vivier, report to the Canada Council, undated [c. March 1977]: copy in the Archives of the Fondation Vivier, Montreal.

It seems clear that Stockhausen wanted very much to be reinvited, and was not happy about this rejection. When Ernst Thomas, the director, mentioned the cost of Stockhausen's concerts as one reason for not inviting him for 1976, Stockhausen briefly replied that he didn't insist on having concerts and might be prepared to accept a lower rate of remuneration for his teaching.<sup>37</sup>

How should we understand this assault on Stockhausen's position, and his removal from the Darmstadt courses? The musicologist Paul Griffiths has written of the "failure of faith" in the idea of a common language of new music – the serial language, with all the universalist claims made for it by Stockhausen in his teaching and writings – which rendered much of the content of the Darmstadt courses irrelevant to the younger generation.<sup>38</sup> Martin Iddon has moreover suggested that "the continuing presence of Stockhausen [at Darmstadt] was of primary significance in creating the impression of a dearth of talented younger composers. Stockhausen overshadowed the younger prospects in a way that might not have been the case had Boulez and Nono remained to provide a counterbalance."<sup>39</sup>

As to Vivier's attitude to this perceived debasement of his teacher's standing in the German new music world, we can only speculate. He was in any case not present to witness first-hand the fall-out from the Darmstadt debacle, as he returned to Montreal, his Canada Council grant used up, in late August 1974, and would not return to Europe for another two and a half years. What we can say with certainty is that he retained his belief in Stockhausen's work and continued to regard him as a mentor, someone with whom he hoped to retain contact and to consult whenever possible for moral support and guidance. In the report that Vivier submitted to the Canada Council in the early months of 1977, following the premature ending of what was intended to be a year-long trip to Asia, he noted that after the time he spent in Egypt (following more extended visits to Japan and Bali, and after brief visits to Singapore and Iran),

*j'étais nerveusement et physiquement très fatigué et qu'il m'était devenu très pénible de continuer de rester en pays aussi étranger sans verser dans le tourisme. J'ai donc décidé de clore mon voyage, de passer quelque temps à Paris pour me remettre dans la composition et après me rendre à Cologne pour revoir le tout avec Stockhausen et mes amis compositeurs. Il m'était très important de prendre quelque temps avec Stockhausen pour revoir le tout et avoir les idées claires sur la situation.<sup>40</sup>*

To have "*idées claires*": that was always Vivier's wish, and in that quest Stockhausen had helped him enormously. Nearly three years after the end of their period of formal contact, Vivier still regarded the German composer in much the same light as he had always done.

## 5. “Le métier d’écrire”

Asked by the Montreal music critic Claude Gingras in September 1974 what he had learned from Stockhausen, Vivier replied:

*Tout d’abord, être capable d’être assez fort devant Stockhausen pour ne pas laisser tomber mes propres idées. Ensuite et surtout, penser musique avant tout. Être capable de faire le lien entre tout le côté abstrait d’une pièce (sa structure) et la musique qui en résulte. C’est-à-dire être capable de traduire les visions qu’on a. C’est-à-dire être compositeur... être capable de structurer une chose et en même temps entendre ce que ça donne. Être archi-critique vis-à-vis de moi-même et vis-à-vis de la musique que j’écris et vis-à-vis des autres musiciens que j’entends... Ce que j’ai appris chez Stockhausen: le métier d’écrire... comment organiser les proportions générales, élargir ma vision des durées. C’est le plus grand musicien actuel parce que c’est le plus grand compositeur. Il amène la musique dans le futur et en même temps il change votre façon d’entendre la musique dans le passé. Avec lui, on comprend mieux Mahler, on comprend mieux Ockeghem...<sup>41</sup>*

41. Vivier quoted in Gingras, 1974.

Walter Boudreau, who attended Stockhausen’s classes at Darmstadt in 1972, has perceptively noted that studying with Stockhausen was “like spending forty days in the desert,” a sort of purification. He feels the results for Vivier were highly beneficial because *Chants* marks a turning point in his œuvre. Boudreau had stayed briefly with Vivier after the Darmstadt courses in 1972 when Vivier was working on *Désintégration*; he feels the Stockhausen experience “cornered Claude into facing what was his music and what wasn’t”; the outcome was that Stockhausen set Vivier on a path that led ultimately to the development of the personal voice of his later works.<sup>42</sup>

42. Walter Boudreau interviewed by the author, Montreal, November 14, 2002.

Are there any examples of actual borrowings in the work of the two men? The musicologist Jean-Noël von der Weid finds in *Chants* “numerous pigments derived from Stockhausen’s *Momente*”, without however specifying exactly what these pigments are.<sup>43</sup> Richard Toop, on the other hand, has suggested that Stockhausen “may have made a minor appropriation from Claude’s work: the Indian bells to which the mime in *Inori* exits are distinctly reminiscent of the end of Claude’s *Chants*, whose premiere Stockhausen attended.”<sup>44</sup> Paul Griffiths has noted that Vivier’s orchestral work *Siddhartha* (1976) is close to then-recent Stockhausen,<sup>45</sup> and the influence of Stockhausen on this particular work has been exhaustively explored in a recent article by the composer Jean Lesage, who has written: “L’œuvre illustre de façon exemplaire l’influence des techniques de composition de Karlheinz Stockhausen sur la pensée de Vivier tout autant que la fascination de ce dernier pour certains procédés caractéristiques des musiques orientales tel le rāga indien.”<sup>46</sup> It is hard not to see a similarity between the concept and structure of Vivier’s

43. von der Weid, 2006.

44. Richard Toop, email to the author, August 15, 2002.

45. Griffiths, 2005, p. 188.

46. Lesage, 2008.

*Learning* (1976) for four violins and percussion, described by its composer as “*l’apprentissage de la mélodie*”, and Stockhausen’s *Tierkreis* (1974-75), which consists of twelve melodies, each representing one of the signs of the Zodiac: the idea of structuring a large-scale composition in the form of a succession of melodies, however elaborate and unconventional, was a radical one at that time.

There are, of course, more fundamental techniques in Vivier’s work that have close parallels in that of Stockhausen but which nonetheless do not originate with him nor are they specific to his work. For example, Vivier’s commitment to pre-compositional calculation and the extensive pre-working of material never faded, as can be seen by the substantial portfolios of sketches he left for works throughout his lifetime. Stockhausen was intensely committed to what Kevin Volans has called “working through all the possibilities of the material” and to pre-planning, an attitude that Vivier shared – although, interestingly, Stockhausen’s abandonment of pre-compositional working in the “intuitive music” of the late 1960s and early 1970s has no real parallel in Vivier’s work.<sup>47</sup>

47. Volans quoted in Gilmore, 2006, pp. 22-29.

It is clear, finally, that what Vivier learned from Stockhausen went beyond specific compositional techniques into what may be called more “cosmic” matters. Asked by Jonathan Cott about his relationship “as a German composer to the musical and spiritual awarenesses you arrived at in Japan and Bali”, Stockhausen replied:

You see, once you’ve achieved a certain independence from the natural forces and your heritage, you can become someone who also discovers within himself the Balinese and the Japanese. That’s why it’s wrong to say, “He’s influenced by the Japanese.” What I’ve actually experienced is that I came to Japan and discovered the Japanese in me. I immediately wanted to become that “Japanese”, because it was new to me that I could live like that.<sup>48</sup>

48. Cott, 1974, pp. 32-33.

Again, this could easily be Vivier talking. “*Stockhausen veut élargir le champ de la conscience humaine*,” Vivier had written: in this wish the German composer found a ready and loyal accomplice in his Canadian student. The “*grand appel solitaire et triste*” that Vivier heard as the autobiographical heart of Stockhausen’s *Momente* whistles down the decades to us in Vivier’s own music as well, uniting these two cosmic travellers on their temporary passage through this world.

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